

Utah State University

**DigitalCommons@USU**

---

All Graduate Plan B and other Reports

Graduate Studies

---

5-2016

## Understanding the Mormon War of 1838

Tabitha Merkley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/gradreports>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Merkley, Tabitha, "Understanding the Mormon War of 1838" (2016). *All Graduate Plan B and other Reports*. 843.

<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/gradreports/843>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Plan B and other Reports by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@usu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@usu.edu).



UNDERSTANDING THE MORMON WAR  
OF 1838

By

Tabitha Merkley

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

American Studies

Approved:

---

Kerin Holt  
Major Professor

---

Philip Barlow  
Committee Member

---

Melody Graulich  
Committee Member

Copyright © Tabitha Merkley 2016

All Rights Reserved

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Kerin Holt for being my committee chair and for all the encouragement and guidance she gave me. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dr. Philip Barlow and Dr. Melody Graulich for their support and assistance throughout the entire process.

I also want to give a special thanks to my family, friends, and colleagues for helping me continue to press forward and not give up. I would not have been able to get through this without you.

Tabitha Merkley

## PREFACE

For my thesis I decided to do a literature review about the 1838 Mormon War in Missouri. The Mormons started settling in Missouri in 1831 because Joseph Smith told his followers that Jackson County was set aside as the place where they would establish Zion. Almost right away there were conflicts between the Missourians and the Mormons. The Missourians were suspicious of the Mormons and their beliefs because the Mormons had told Missourians that God was going to take the land away from the Missourians and give the land to the Mormons. As a result of these suspicions, the Mormons were driven out of Jackson County in 1833 by Missouri residents and, later, from other counties in Missouri as well. They petitioned the Missouri government for help to get their property back but received very little help. In 1836, Caldwell County was set up by the Missouri legislature for the Mormons to settle. In the early part of 1838, Mormons started to settle outside of Caldwell which, once again, upset some Missourians so conflict broke out. As the year went on, there were a number of armed conflicts between Mormons and Missourians. Both sides had vigilante groups who plundered and destroyed property. At times, the state militia was involved as well, but they were not able to do much to end the conflict. In October 1838, Governor Boggs issued an extermination order against the Mormons. According to the order, Mormons were to be driven from Missouri or be killed. In November 1838, the Mormons surrendered and were forced to leave the state. The Mormons fled to Illinois in 1839.

This literature review will focus on the time period from 1838 to 1839, during which the Mormon War took place. I have reviewed five books: Leland H. Gentry's *A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839* (1965), Stephen

C LeSueur's *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (1986), Alexander L. Baugh's *A Call to Arms: the 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri* (1971), Richard Lyman Bushman's *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (2005), and *The Missouri Mormon Experience* (2010) edited by Thomas M. Spencer. Each of these authors are notable historians, and I chose these books because of the critical reviews they have received and the new insights they give to understanding the Mormon War, particularly regarding the cultural influences on the Mormons and the Missourians and the roles of all those who were involved in the conflict. I also chose these books because they were written at different times which allowed me to examine how the scholarship has changed. I have examined how each author portrays the events of the Mormon War and asked questions such as the following: Are the authors more biased towards one group as opposed to another?; What sources are they using to examine history?; How do these authors interpret the events of the war?; What new insights do they offer?; In what ways do the authors agree or disagree with each other. Each of these books have given me a better understanding how people interpreted the Mormons' time in Missouri and the effect it had on those who were involved. The Mormon War is a complicated subject where people on both sides are to blame for the conflict, but historians do not always agree about which accounts might have been exaggerated and which ones are more truthful. Understanding how historians have interpreted the different events has helped me gain a better understanding about which views have been covered and what is still missing.

This literature review consists of two parts. The first part is an annotated bibliography of each of the five works I studied. The annotated bibliographies consist of a detailed summary of each book, followed by an analysis and critique of how the author

interprets and evaluates the events of the Mormon War. The second part is a review essay where I analyze each of the five works and their contribution to the understanding of the Mormon War. In this essay, I discuss some of the reasons why studying the Mormon War is important, such as learning about the effects of extralegal violence and how both the Mormons and the Missourians are at fault for the war. I also examine how each author contributed to the understanding of the Mormon War and what is still lacking in these studies.

This literature review has helped me gain a better understanding of how the people involved in the war interpreted the conflicts. It has also given me a good background for later research into how people outside of Missouri viewed the Mormon War. I have been able to compare and contrast different interpretations of the war. I plan on working in a museum and this literature review has helped gain a greater knowledge into how life on the frontier differed from back East and the struggles it presented to immigrants. As a result of this thesis, I will be able to teach people that, in conflicts like the Mormon War, usually both sides have committed wrongs. This is a subject that gives a good insight into the cultural differences between two groups in conflict with one another which is needed in historical museums.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Gentry, Leland Homer. *A History of the Latter-Day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839*. Diss. Brigham Young University. 1965. Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History and BYU Studies, 2000. Deseret Bookshelf. Web. 1 Mar 2016.

## SUMMARY

In *A History of the Latter-Day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839*, Gentry tries to give a better understanding of the Mormons' colonization efforts in Northern Missouri and the facts about the relationship between the Mormons and the Missourians from 1836 to 1839. He examines Mormon teachings about Zion and the law of consecration to see what social problems were caused by these teachings. Gentry describes how the Mormons believed God has consecrated Missouri as the place where Zion would be established. Under the law of consecration, the Mormons attempted to blend religion with "social, political, and economic thought" (44). Beliefs about Zion and the law of consecration caused many Missourians to feel threatened. Finally, he also explores the facts about the Danites, a Mormon vigilante group and dissenters and the role they played in the war, the facts about the Mormon War, and the expulsion of the Mormons from Missouri in 1839 (12). Gentry starts by stating that his reason for writing this book was to broaden the understanding of the activities of the Mormons from 1838 to 1839, bring to light sources that were previously unpublished, and give a background about Mormon history before 1836.

Over the next few chapters, Gentry gives a chronological assessment of the war, from its earliest stages through the aftermath. He starts by examining how the Missouri legislature established a county in northern Missouri, known as Caldwell County, as a



place for the Mormons to settle in. Many Missourians thought that the agreement meant that the Mormons would not settle anywhere else. Gentry then goes on to describe the disputes. One of the first disputes examined by Gentry took place in Far West, the county seat of Caldwell County, and dealt with non-Mormon merchants trying to move into Far West. Gentry explains, "The problem of Gentile trade was intensified by their repeated attempts to introduce spirituous liquors into the County" (133). Alcohol was against the Mormon health code known as the Word of Wisdom, and the Mormon leaders would not allow the sale of alcohol in Caldwell County. According to Gentry, Mormon leaders would repeatedly check on businesses to make sure they were not selling any merchandise that was against the Word of Wisdom because the non-Mormon merchants would continually try to bring in forbidden products.

Money was another issue that Gentry brings up that caused problems amongst Mormons. The Mormon Church was in debt due to being driven out of Jackson County Missouri in 1833 and losing all their land, trying to obtain land for incoming settlers, and the failure of the bank the Mormons attempted to set up in Kirkland. Between 1836 and 1837, two of the members of the Presidency in Zion, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer used money obtained from Mormons in the Southern states to help purchase land for the church in their own names and then sold the land for profit. Phelps and Whitmer kept the money they made from selling the land. Gentry argues, "Failure of the two men to consult with their colleagues in the important decisions they made on behalf of the Saints was interpreted as a flagrant disregard for accepted Church procedure as well as a personal insult to their brethren" (166-167). The monetary issues divided the Mormons and led to many members either leaving the Church or being excommunicated. Many of

these Mormons who left were the ones who later turned the Missourians against the Mormons.

Gentry also explores lawsuits that were filed against the Mormon Church by dissenters to get money from the Church. The dissenters also stirred up trouble amongst other Mormons. Gentry argues that Sidney Rigdon's "Salt Sermon" and the creation of the Danites came about in the summer of 1838, partially because of the problems with the dissenters. In June 1838, the Danites wrote a letter to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and Lyman E. Johnson telling them to leave Caldwell County. Gentry spends a chapter discussing the Danites. He argues that Sampson Avard was the leader of the Danites, and that Avard claimed to have the approval of the First Presidency of the church.

After exploring all the events and issues leading up to the Mormon War, Gentry goes on to explore the 1838 war in detail, focusing specifically on expanding the readers' understanding about the conflicts in the different counties Mormons had settled in. He argues that the Mormons prolonged the war with their determination to defend themselves. He states, "It cannot be imagined what would have happened had the Mormon people not mobilized for war, but it can be said, in view of subsequent developments, that their decision to do so was a fateful one" (563). Their determination encouraged General Atchison to try to get Governor Boggs involved, but the governor refused. Gentry argues that because Boggs would not listen to the Mormons point of view and would not come out and see what was happening he "could scarcely be expected to possess the facts essential to making a rational decision" (572). According to

Gentry, Boggs' refusal to examine both sides of the conflict played a part in him issuing an order to have the Mormons driven out or exterminated.

Gentry also claims that the Mormons did receive a little help from the state militia leaders during the conflict. Gentry points out how General Atchison refused to let his men take part in trying to drive the Mormons out of Missouri. General Doniphan also helped the Mormons by not allowing his men to take part in any mob actions. Doniphan dismissed Captain Samuel Bogart because of his mob sympathies. Gentry quotes an unnamed second source who stated, "Bogard [sic] and his company...were not to be depended upon, for he was lawless, if not more so, and as mobocratic as the worst of the mob" (563). After his dismissal, Gentry explores letters Bogart wrote to Boggs and argues that these letters aided in turning Boggs against the Mormons.

Gentry goes through the main conflicts of the Mormon War mostly by examining one county at a time. He also examines claims from Missourians about Mormons damaging their property. Missourians accused the Mormons of stealing and burning down homes. Gentry points out how Mormons claimed that many of the Missourians burned down their homes as they left and then accused the Mormons of the destruction. He explores a claim by one man, "Uriah B. Powell, a citizen of Clinton County, Missouri, allegedly confided to William Smith that he was present at a meeting when plans were laid by the Missourians to burn their homes and blame it on the Saints" (585-586). Gentry argues that both sides were guilty of stealing and property destruction.

Gentry ends the book by exploring the aftermath of the war and the exodus of the Mormons from Missouri. He discusses Colonel Hinkle's, a military leader for the Mormons, meeting with General Lucas in Far West to discuss terms of surrender. Gentry

argues that Lucas regarded Hinkle, not Joseph Smith, as the person he should negotiate with. Smith later viewed this meeting as a betrayal and excommunicated Hinkle because Smith had wanted negotiators to discuss with him before agreeing to anything. Gentry claims that "Hinkle gave his brethren to understand that General Lucas wished to hold an interview with them, when, in fact, the final decision was to be Hinkle's alone" (731). At this next meeting, Lucas arrested Smith and other leaders. General Doniphan was later able to stop those arrested from being illegally executed. Between late 1838 and early 1839, the Mormons left Missouri for Illinois.

## ANALYSIS

*A History of the Latter-Day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839* was one of the first books to examine the Mormon War and clear up misunderstandings people have had about the conflict. For the time this book was written, it added a lot to the scholarship about the Mormon War. He uses documents such as the Danite Constitution, the lists of charges from hearings against Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Lyman E Johnson, and bills presented to the Missouri Legislation in 1839 asking for a full-scale investigation into the war, which do not seem to appear in other works about the Mormon War. While these documents do give more insight into the war, some are too long. He cites an entire bill that was presented to the legislature that is seven pages long. Some of the longer quotes, and other cited works, would have worked better if they were summarized with the entirety published in an appendix. Also, the summaries at the end of each chapter could be incorporated better into Gentry's book. I liked how many

different letters Gentry used because they add a firsthand account to the events of the Mormon War, but it might have been better if they were summarized.

Gentry brings up an important point about the Danites being confused with the Mormon militia because of their defensive actions and because both were divided into similar sized units. Gentry claims, "Added confusion as to the distinct nature of the two organizations results when one considers that many of the Danites also belonged to the "Armies of Israel" (Mormon militia) and made no attempt to distinguish between their services for either group" (502). This is a point that LeSueur does not bring up in his book about the Mormon War. The similarities of both groups made it easy for Sampson Averd to accuse Joseph Smith of leading the Danites during the trial after the war.

Another important claim that Gentry makes is that the Mormons prolonged the conflict by defending themselves. He argues that the Mormons felt it necessary to defend themselves because of rumors about mobs and because the state militia was not able to do their job. Gentry states, "It cannot be imagined what would have happened had the Mormon people not mobilized for war, but it can be said, in view of subsequent developments, that their decision to do so was a fateful one" (563). This claim is important because Gentry cites it as the reason why the Mormons' actions were accused of being "mob-inspired." Other historians I have studied do not make similar claims. Gentry is arguing that the outcome of the war would have been very different if the Mormons choose not to defend themselves.

LeSueur, Stephen C. *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*. Columbia: U of Missouri, 1987. Print.

## SUMMARY

In *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, Stephen C. LeSueur focuses on the use of extralegal violence by Mormons and Missourians during the Mormon War. He argues about how powerful a force extralegal violence was and the part it played in the culture of America. In his book, LeSueur refers to those who took the law into their own hands as “vigilantes.” The use of extralegal violence affected civil authorities’ ability to keep peace and govern the people. LeSueur states, "Nineteenth-century Americans, with their traditional distrust of strong governments and standing armies, refused to give their governments substantial police power, lest some tyrant use that power to oppress the people....Civil authorities consequently lacked the force necessary to preserve order in times of rioting and widespread lawlessness" (2). According to LeSueur, these types of attitudes towards governments and armies allowed the Mormon War to happen.

Another major issue he addresses is the differences between the Mormons and the Missourians. Most Missourians came from the South, but most Mormons came from the East. The cultural differences of the two sides played an important role in the war. LeSueur goes through the timeline of events starting first with a brief description of how the Mormon Church came to be and what led them to start settling in Missouri. When the Mormons first started to settle in Jackson County in 1831, they told Missourians that God set aside that area for Zion, and he would destroy the wicked and give the land to the Saints. The Missourians became very suspicious about the Mormons, their beliefs, and the political influence the Mormons could have over Missourians and some Missourians

decided they did not want the Mormons around. LeSueur gives a brief description about how the Mormons were driven out of Jackson County in Missouri in 1833. They tried to settle in other counties in Missouri, and, eventually, in 1836 Caldwell County was established as a place for the Mormons to settle in. Missourians were under the assumption that the Mormons would only settle in Caldwell, but LeSueur could not find any record that the Mormons agreed to this. LeSueur explains how the misunderstanding about where the Mormons would settle led to hostility between the two sides. Once Caldwell County was established, Mormons started to come to settle in Missouri in larger numbers. LeSueur stated, “The rapid influx of Mormons alarmed the older settlers especially those who had purchased land or town lots in areas they hoped to develop into a prosperous community” (34). Missourians were also concerned about the economic threat Mormons presented.

LeSueur cites three developments among the Mormons in 1838 that changed their relationship with Missourians and led to conflict: first, an increase in the number of Mormons and settlements outside of Caldwell; second, a group of Mormon men formed a secret society called the Danites, who drove dissenters out of Caldwell; and finally, the Mormons took a belligerent stance against those they viewed as enemies. According to LeSueur, the Danites plundered, robbed, and committed other crimes against Missourians and dissenters. LeSueur argues that Joseph Smith knew and approved of the Danites’ actions. According to LeSueur, “the First Presidency not only knew of the Danites’ teachings and goals, but they also used the organization as an extralegal vigilante for to protect the interests of the Church” (45). Disagreements about what the Danites were doing and disagreements about church doctrine led to some Mormons leaving the church.

LeSeuer points out that Missourians also formed vigilante groups that committed similar crimes against Mormons as the Danites committed.

LeSeuer also points out that not all Missourians disliked the Mormons. There were some prominent leaders such as General Doniphan, General Atchison, and others who sympathized with the Mormons. Doniphan helped the Mormons the most by establishing Caldwell County and serving as a lawyer for the Mormons. After the Mormons had surrendered in November 1838, General Lucas took Joseph Smith and six other Mormon leaders as prisoners. Lucas ordered Doniphan to execute them, but Doniphan refused, saying it would be "cold-blooded murder" and therefore, prevented the Mormon prisoners from being executed (182-183).

LeSueur goes on to discuss the different conflicts that took place. He tells about the Danites and Missouri vigilante groups taking matters into their own hands and fighting each other. Militia got involved eventually, but they had a hard time controlling the Mormons and Missourians due to the use of extralegal violence by both sides. The Mormons were driven out of settlements such as DeWitt, Far West was put under siege at one point, and there was a massacre at Haun's Mill. A number of other conflicts also took place for which both the Mormons and Missourians were responsible. In October 1838, Governor Boggs issued an order saying the Mormons were to be driven from the state or exterminated. The Mormons left and went to Illinois in 1839. In the conclusion, LeSueur states, "For the Mormons, the conflict was over religious principles; for non-Mormon vigilantes, it was over community values" (255).



## ANALYSIS

In this book, LeSueur makes some good points, but also overlooks some important details. LeSueur's discussion of the tradition of extralegal violence and the role it played in the Mormon War is useful. A majority of the violent acts were committed by Mormon and Missourian vigilante groups which caused the conflict to escalate and hindered the state militia's ability to get the conflict under control. I like that LeSueur puts so much emphasis on extralegal violence because this violence shaped the entire war, and the results would have been vastly different if law enforcement and the militia were able to do their job without interference. LeSueur also does a good job of showing how neither side was innocent in this conflict. There were wrongs committed by both sides. He does not cover up the actions of the Danites or justify them. His argument effectively helps end the idea that the Mormon War was a one-sided conflict. He points out the truth that the Mormons were not simply the victims, but also the perpetrators.

LeSueur does appear biased against Mormon leaders at points. At one point he discusses an attack from Captain Bogart, who was a local Methodist minister, and his men against Mormons. He cites affidavits from Sydney Rigdon and Hyrum Smith (Joseph Smith's brother), who were prominent Mormon leaders, and characterizes their accounts as being exaggerated. The affidavits tell about several homes being destroyed by Bogart and his men, but LeSueur writes, "No substantial evidence supports these claims. All eyewitness accounts by Mormon settlers state that they [the Mormons] were either disarmed or ordered to leave their homes, but they do not report any burning or plundering by the Ray County troops" (133). LeSueur does not reference any of these

eyewitness accounts that would prove Sydney Rigdon's and Hyrum Smith's affidavits to be overly exaggerated. Later, LeSueur cites affidavits signed by Orson Hyde and Thomas B. Marsh, who both left the Mormon Church in October of 1838, about militant activities of the Mormons and Joseph Smith's claims that his people would overtake the country and eventually the entire world. LeSueur uses these affidavits to argue that Mormons planned to use military action to take over land in Missouri. Even though this is a bold claim, these affidavits are not mentioned as being overly exaggerated, even though there is no other proof Joseph Smith wanted to take over the United States or the world by using military action. Smith wanted to spread his religion throughout the world and missionaries were sent out to different places including Canada and Europe to convert people, but they were not using force to do so. There is evidence in the form of personal accounts that Joseph Smith believed the Mormons had the right to try to take back their land by any means necessary, but in the research I have done, I have not seen accounts that the Mormons wanted to drive all non-Mormons from the state. LeSueur states the affidavits of Hyde and Marsh as being from leading Mormon officials but does not say the same thing about Sydney Rigdon and Hyrum Smith, even though Rigdon was a part of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church. LeSueur does not make any remark about some dissenters being bitter towards the Mormon Church and does not appear to take dissenters' biases into account when referencing their writings. Also, I do not believe LeSueur has enough evidence to show that Joseph Smith approved of the actions of the Danites. Other historians such as Alexander L. Baugh and Leland Gentry claim Joseph Smith knew about them, but these sources do not claim Smith knew and approved

of their actions to the same extent as LeSueur. Baugh argues that historians disagree on how much Joseph Smith knew about and participated in the action of the Danites.

When discussing the part Missourians played in the Mormon War, LeSueur does not seem as harsh towards the Missourians as he does with the Mormons. He goes into a lot more detail about what the Mormons did than he does the Missourians. Names of Mormons who were part of the Danites and who were involved the various conflicts are given, but aside from political and military leaders, LeSueur does not name as many Missourians. LeSueur does not condone actions of Missouri vigilantes, but he does not put as much emphasis on their actions as he does with the Danites. Actions taken by the Missouri vigilante groups are brought up, but not in as much detail as actions of the Danites. Missouri vigilantes are discussed in groups, but the Mormons are named as individuals more often. Governor Boggs's extermination order is still seen as wrong, along with crimes committed by the Missouri vigilante groups, but LeSueur's approach is not balanced. In the bibliographical essay, LeSueur states that he used "over two hundred journals, diaries, sketches, and reminiscences written by Mormons" (268), but firsthand accounts from Missourians are mostly newspapers and correspondence between state militia leaders. I would have liked to have seen more firsthand accounts from Missourians, describing how they viewed the conflicts, coming from journals and not from the newspapers. Leland Gentry and Alexander Baugh cite some first had accounts, such as correspondence between military leaders, which I believe would have helped LeSueur postion.

LeSueur does add a lot to the scholarship about the Mormon War, but there is room for more discussion about the role of Missourians and Mormon dissenters played in

the war. The records that were kept need to be examined for possible biases and how they shaped people's views about the war in 1838 and now.

Baugh, Alexander L. *A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri*. Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, 2000. Print.

## SUMMARY

In *A Call to Arms*, Alexander L. Baugh gives a chronological account of the Mormon War in Missouri in 1838, focusing mostly on the military aspect. He attempts to examine the civil conflict more closely and show how vigilantes, county regulators, and state officials took illegal actions against the Mormons during the conflict. He attempts to fill in gaps left by other historians with the civil conflicts in Missouri, the military operations and movement of the Mormon and Missourian participants such the role of militias and the laws governing them (3). Baugh starts by giving a brief history of the founding of the Mormon Church and the conflict in Jackson County, Missouri in 1833. He goes on to examine the creation of Caldwell County for Mormons to settle in and the beginning of the 1838 conflict and ends with the arrest of Joseph Smith and other church leaders in November 1838.

Before getting into the conflict, Baugh draws a comparison between early militias, set up by the British forces and the early American colonists, and the state militia in Missouri. Militias played a major part of the early history of the United States, when states started to establish their own militias to maintain order. Baugh explores how Missourians were particularly interested in militia service. He also explores how militias went hand in hand with extralegal violence and led to mob rule in Missouri. According to Baugh, the Missourians saw the Mormons as a threat to their way of life. He argues, "Mormon beliefs, combined with the ideals of collectivism, certain elements of separatism, a strong ecclesiastical hierarchy, and a merging together of church and state,

were viewed as being incompatible with American republicanism" (29). Because the Mormons did not fit in with the Missourian ideals of republicanism, many Missourians felt justified in forming militia groups to drive the Mormons out. The Mormons also established a county militia in order to defend themselves against those who might try to drive them out of Caldwell and other settlements.

Baugh also examines the problems Mormons faced with dissenters. Some of the dissenters were accused of conspiring with mobs against the Mormons and "vilifying and slandering the character and name of Joseph Smith" (35). To protect Mormons against the dissenters, a group of Mormons formed a secret group known as the Danites, who sought to drive the dissenters out of Far West and other Mormon settlements. Baugh points out that although the Danites were a military type group, they were a separate group from the militia. According to John Corrill, a Mormon historian living at the time of the Mormon War, there were about 300 Danites, but the number of Mormons defending Far West and other settlements was about 900, which shows that a majority of Mormons were not a part of the Danites. Baugh argues that Joseph Smith knew of the Danites and supported some of their early actions but was not aware of some of their teachings until the Mormon War was over.

Baugh chronologically goes through the different conflicts that took place in northern Missouri between the Mormons and the Missourians in 1838. He starts with the conflict at the election in Gallatin, Daviess County, on August 6, 1838 and the subsequent encounter with Judge Adam Black by a group of Mormons. Baugh refers to the election-day battle as the start of the Mormon War but does not go into detail about it. Once Mormons in Far West heard about the battle, a group of armed men, including

several Danites, decided to visit Judge Adam Black in order to get the judge to sign a statement stating he would promise to stop the vigilantes and let the Mormons live in peace. Joseph Smith was part of the group of Mormons, including some Danites, who went to visit Black to get him to sign the statement (48-49). The encounter with Judge Black caused other counties to become concerned, and they attempted to drive the Mormons out. Baugh argues that the different accounts of the encounter with Judge Black and other conflicts were exaggerated, causing more Missourians to turn against the Mormons. These exaggerated accounts also encouraged Missourians to form vigilante groups to drive the Mormons out. He claims that Missourians got most of their information from newspapers and most of these newspaper reports were negative towards the Mormons (53).

The next conflict Baugh focuses on was in De Witt, Carrollton County. De Witt was the first settlement Mormons were driven out of during the war. The Missourians in Carrollton County held a meeting in August 1838 and made plans to drive the Mormons out. Baugh cites a letter that was written to a non-Mormon woman in De Witt, warning her to leave De Witt so that she and other non-Mormons would not be harmed when the vigilantes came to drive the Mormons out. De Witt was placed under siege from October 1<sup>st</sup> to October 10<sup>th</sup> when the Mormons surrendered and agreed to leave De Witt.

Baugh then goes on to discuss the later campaigns in Daviess (sic) County and the involvement of both the Mormon militia and the state militia. The Mormon then came into conflict with the Ray County militia during the battle at Crooked River starting on October 23, 1838. Baugh argues that the reports about the Battle of Crooked River were exaggerated in order to claim the Mormons had massacred Captain Bogart and his men,

even though there were only four fatalities (108-109). Baugh states that as a result of the Battle of Crooked River, Governor Boggs issued the extermination order against the Mormons on October 27<sup>th</sup>.

The next conflict Baugh examines is the Haun's Mill massacre October 30, 1838 on the edge of Caldwell County. Mormon dissenters living in Livingston County, located next to Caldwell County, fueled antagonism against the Mormons. Claims were made by the dissenters that the Mormons were planning on attacking the people in Livingston County. Starting on October 25<sup>th</sup>, a group of men from Daviess and Livingston Counties, led by Nehemiah Comstock, demanded the Mormons at Haun's Mill turn over all their weapons. While there were some attempts to reach a peace agreement, Baugh argues that the attempts to disarm the Mormons and the negotiations were part of a plan to eradicate the Mormons. Jacob Haun went to Far West to discuss the situation with Joseph Smith. According to Baugh, Smith told Haun to abandon the mill, but Haun claimed they could defend it. When Haun went back to Haun's Mill he told the people that Smith told him if they felt like they could defend the mill then they should stay. Baugh claims that Jacob Haun is partially responsible for what happened at Haun's Mill. Knowing an attack would happen at some point the Mormons gathered what weapon they still possessed. On October 30 a regiment of about 200 to 300 men from Livingston and Daviess Counties attacked the Mormons. Most of the women and children fled to the woods while a group of 38 men and 3 boys gathered in a blacksmith shop. Baugh describes how the blacksmith shop served as more of a slaughter house than a fortification. The Missourian attackers shot at the women and children fleeing as well as the men



attempting to defend the settlement. In the end, 18 were killed or mortally wounded, mostly men, and about 12 to 15 wounded.

Baugh argues the massacre was not a result of the extermination order because the Livingston and Daviess vigilantes had started to disarm the Mormons prior to Boggs issuing the order and they made the final preparations on October 29<sup>th</sup>. It would have been impossible for copies of the order to have made it to the commanding generals in two days. News of the massacre hit the Mormons hard. Baugh states it “demonstrated to the Latter-day Saints the extent to which the anti-Mormon element would go in order to bring about the Mormon removal” (140). Colonel Hinkle, a Mormon, led a delegation to General Lucas’s camp and surrendered. Hinkle returned to Far West with General Lucas, who arrested Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders.

Baugh concludes his history of the war by discussing the militia occupation of Caldwell and Daviess counties for weeks following the surrender. He also explores the conditions set by the militia for the Mormons’ departure from Missouri and what happened to the Mormon leaders who were arrested.

## ANALYSIS

Alexander L. Baugh brings up some good points I have not seen in other accounts about the Mormon War. One of these points Baugh focuses on is the history of militias in the United States, which draws attention to the importance of extralegal violence in the Mormon War. With counties in different states having their own branch of the state militia, it shows how people were used to resolving conflicts on a more local level. The

discussion about the militias is important, because it shows how people justified using extralegal violence. It would not be a far step to go from having a county militia to forming a vigilante group to handle problems. Baugh also points out that Missourians were interested in serving in the militia. He states, "During the decade the Mormons resided in the state, historical evidence suggests there was considerable interest and zeal among the general male population for militia service" (25). LeSueur brings up extralegal violence, but I like that Baugh brought up the militia because it is important to note that the Mormons made it a priority to set up a militia in Caldwell County. It was not just vigilante groups, such as the Danites, who were fighting on behalf of the Mormons.

Another important point Baugh brings up is that the extermination order was not the reason for the attack on Haun's Mill. Baugh claims that, in the past, historians have connected the massacre with the extermination order because the massacre happened after the order was issued but he argues the vigilantes could not have seen the order until after the attack. Baugh claims the Livingston and Daviess vigilantes had started to disarm the Mormons prior to Boggs issuing the order and the final preparations for the attack were made on October 29<sup>th</sup>. It would have been impossible for copies of the order to have made it to the commanding generals in two days. Instead, he argues the attack was probably retaliation for raids conducted by Mormons against vigilante leaders. Baugh also argues, "it is highly unlikely that either of the two commanding generals, Atchison, who was somewhat sympathetic to the Mormons, or even Lucas, who was bitterly anti-Mormon, would have used the exterminating order to authorize Jennings to move ahead and annihilate the Haun's Mill community" (127). This point about the

extermination order not being the reason for the attack on Haun's Mill is important because it shows how the vigilantes operated separately from the militia.

Baugh's use of some firsthand accounts from Missourians that were missing from LeSueur's and Gentry's accounts of the Mormon War to make his work stand out. One example is a letter sent to a non-Mormon woman by the name of Elizabeth Smith living in De Witt. The letter was written by non-Mormons, who were planning the attack on De Witt, warning her to leave De Witt so she would not be harmed by mistake. This letter demonstrated how Missourians wanted to make sure they were only attacking the Mormons. Baugh also includes an account from Joseph H. McGee, who worked at a store in Gallatin, about the Mormons looting in Gallatin and explains that Missourians were afraid of the Mormons coming to their home and stealing from them (86). This account provides clear evidence that the Mormons were the aggressors at times. These accounts along with others help Baugh discuss the war from both sides.

Even though Baugh does include personal accounts from Missourians, he is biased towards the Mormons. The Mormons are portrayed to be acting mainly on the defensive in conflicts. For example, Baugh points out that, during the siege at De Witt, representatives from other counties were informed by the vigilantes that a war of extermination was being waged. Baugh puts in a statement from one of the representatives about the Mormons in De Witt begging for peace and wanted the civil authorities to resolve the conflict (74). This statement is an example of how Baugh claims the Missourians were more to blame for some of the conflict. At the same time, Baugh does not place as much emphasis on destructive actions taken by Mormons as on actions taken by Missourians. Baugh argues that the Mormons were conducting raids

against the Missourians, they would confine their plundering to Missourians they knew were associated with the mob. In contrast, the attack on Haun's Mill is an example of how the Missourians were against all Mormons. In the conclusion, Baugh argues attempts to drive the Mormons out were unwarranted and illegal and had every right to defend themselves (171). While it is true that many of the actions taken to drive the Mormons out were illegal, it is clear that Baugh is more sympathetic to the Mormons than to Missourians who suffered due to the destruction caused by the Mormons. Baugh argues, "...it must be concluded that the attempts by vigilante groups, county regulators, or state militia to forcibly remove or expel a religious minority such as the Latter-day Saints were entirely unwarranted and illegal" (171). This statement is an example of how Baugh was biased against the Missourians.

Bushman, Richard L. and Jed Woodworth. *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. New York: Vintage, 2005. Print.

## SUMMARY

*Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* is a detailed biography of the life of Joseph Smith Jr., the first prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Richard L. Bushman starts with giving a brief background about Smith's family beginning with his grandparents and his parents. The book goes chronologically through Joseph Smith's life from his birth to his death. He goes over the different struggles Smith went through establishing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon Church). Bushman describes the positive aspects of Smith's personality and also the flaws.

Understanding Smith's biography is important for understanding the Mormon War because the main reason the Mormons went to Missouri were due to revelations Joseph Smith received about Zion being in Missouri. Bushman examines the revelations about Zion and how important it was to Smith to try to establish the city of Zion. Bushman claims, "In Joseph's mind, the Zion drama overshadowed everything, including politics" (168). After the revelations about Zion had been received, most of the actions taken by the Mormon Church and its members focused on trying to build Zion. As he explains Smith's efforts to build Zion in Missouri, Bushman describes why many of the Missourians in Jackson County did not like the Mormons and felt threatened by them. He argues, "The Mormons spoke of the land being redeemed by its rightful inheritors," which they believed were themselves (223). The word "enemies" was used in the revelation, which was understood to mean the Missourians. Many Missourians were concerned about the Mormons taking away their property from them and how much

influence the Mormons had, so the Missourians took action against the Mormons. The residents of Jackson County eventually drove the Mormons out in 1833. Bushman goes into detail about the different ways the Mormons sought to get their property back. For example, he describes how in 1836 Joseph Smith gathered about 200 Mormons, mostly men, to go to Missouri and help protect the Mormons. This group was known as Zion's Camp. Bushman claims the Mormons were encouraged to organize a militia to defend themselves, and Zion's Camp was the answer. Zion's Camp turned out to be a failure because they were disbanded before reaching Jackson County and did not succeed in getting any of the Mormons their land back. Bushman explores other examples where the Mormons continued to use legal means to try to get their land back but never succeeded.

Bushman also explores how the Mormons were driven out of other counties until Caldwell County was organized in 1836 for the Mormons to settle in. In January 1838, Joseph Smith and his wife Emma left Kirkland, Ohio to move to Far West, Missouri. Bushman claims that Smith was eager for the chance to build a city from the ground up. Before leaving Kirkland, many Mormons left the church due to financial trials the church was going through. Joseph Smith had set up a bank in Kirkland that failed causing personal losses and a decrease in opportunities (332). Bushman argues that these dissenters caused a lot of problems for Smith. Smith soon realized that the problem of dissension had spread to Caldwell. While trying to establish Zion, Smith had received a revelation about how the Mormons were supposed to live. One part of the revelation asked the Mormons to consecrate their property to the church. There was a bishopric setup to oversee the distribution of property. Bushman tells how many Mormons

struggled with this doctrine and ended up leaving the church. These dissenters created problems for the church and gave support to the Missourians, who were against the Mormons. Bushman goes on to discuss how a group of Mormons formed a secret group called the Danites to protect themselves from dissenters. He calls the Danites “an example of religious power run amok” (349). The courts later blamed Smith for the actions of the Danites, but Bushman argues that Sampson Avard was the leader of the Danites. Bushman claims that it was the presidency of the church governing the members as opposed to Smith. Because Smith took a step back from governing the church, the Danites were able to gain more power than they would have otherwise. Bushman examines how the Danites felt like they were above the law, and he argues that, during the war, the Mormons struggled to figure out when to trust the law and when to take matters into their own hands. By the summer of 1838, Smith felt like it was time for the Mormons to stand up for themselves.

In August of 1838 war broke out. It started in Gallatin with Missourians trying to stop Mormons from voting. The Mormons went to Judge Adam Black to seek for assurance that he would remain impartial. Bushman points out that Smith was among those who went to see Black, but stayed outside until Black asked to speak with him. The visit did nothing to help the Mormons out; instead, it made things worse. Many Mormons and Missouri officials try to use the courts and other legal means to prevent war but were unable to. As the conflict went on, Bushman argues that the Mormons started to attack suspected mobsters as opposed to just defending themselves. In November 1838 after the Haun’s Mill massacre, the Mormons were forced to surrender. George Hinkle, John Corrill, and Reed Peck were part of the first group of Mormons to

meet with General Lucas to discuss surrendering. Smith later went to meet with Lucas, believing he would be negotiating the terms of surrender, but Smith was arrested instead. Bushman argues that Smith felt betrayed by Hinkle because he believed Hinkle had set the terms for the surrender as opposed to Lucas not wanting to discuss the matter with Smith. Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight, Parley Pratt, Amasa Lyman, Hyrum Smith, and George Robinson were all taken, prisoner. Bushman points out that during the trial, many dissenters spoke out against Smith, but the attorneys for the Mormons advised them not to present their witnesses until the actual trial. Bushman argues that Smith believed the Mormons only acted in self-defense. He claims if the Presidency of the Church knew of the corruptions of Avarad and others, they would not have supported them. Smith was imprisoned along with five other Mormons until they were able to escape in 1839.

## ANALYSIS

I believe that Bushman put together a good biography of Joseph Smith. He brings up some important points such as Smith's dominant personality which gives more understanding to some of the reasons why many Mormons left the Church and the problems these dissenters caused later. Bushman identifies himself as a Mormon but, he does not let his beliefs stop him from detailing the good and bad parts of Smith's personality, and he discusses Smith's strengths and weaknesses. Some Mormon authors



do not like to speak badly about their prophets, but Bushman does his best to portray an honest portrait of Smith.

Bushman explores a system Smith followed called the "code of honor," in which people believed in being deeply loyal to family and friends but would not let others insult them (195). Because of this "code of honor," Smith would respond angrily when insulted even though he wanted to have harmony in the Church. Bushman claims, "While Joseph was sensitive to the spirit of other, he may have been tone-deaf to the spirit of his own words. Unable to bear criticism, he rebuked anyone who challenged him" (296). He also points out that Smith's position as prophet may have also made it hard for Smith to accept criticism. Many members, especially men, became critical and disinterested with Smith when things became difficult. This code of honor, that was followed by Smith and probably others, explains why some people left the Church. Looking at this aspect of Joseph Smith's personality, as described by Bushman, explains why some members and historians believed he was more involved with the Danites that he really was. The code of honor would have driven Smith to encourage members to defend themselves.

Bushman also explores how many Mormons began to doubt Smith was a prophet due to the persecution in Missouri, the church's financial troubles, and new church policies such as plural marriage and the law of consecration. He examines how many of the members who doubted Smith and church doctrine either left the Mormon Church or were excommunicated. By bringing up reasons why some members of the Mormon Church did not like Smith, gives insight into why some members left the church and their attitudes towards the church after they left. Dissenters played a part in turning

Missourians against the Mormon Church, so it is important to look at the reasons why they left in order to understand why they were against the church.

Bushman goes into a lot of detail about the revelations about Zion and how important Zion was to the Mormons, which adds greater understanding to how Smith was affected by what was happening to the Mormons in Missouri. As pointed out in the summary, Zion overshadowed everything for Smith, and Mormons were eager to establish Zion. Bushman describes Zion as “A remote location in the middle of North America...where Mormons from around the globe believed they were to gather, build a temple, live by consecration, have no poor, and be of one heart and one mind” (165). By showing how sacred a place Zion was to the Mormons, Bushman is able to help readers gain an understanding of why Smith and the Mormons cared so much about establishing Zion in Missouri. Bushman explores how Ezra Booth was interested in the fact that “the riches of the Gentiles [were to] be consecrated to the Mormonites; they shall have lands and cattle in abundance and shall possess the gold and silver, and all the treasures of their enemies” (169). Mormons told the Missourians in Jackson about God giving the land to the Mormons, which turned many Missourians against them.

Bushman also does an excellent job of pointing out the dilemma the Mormons faced in deciding whether to trust in the law or defend themselves. He argues, "Non-Mormon citizens could circumvent the law; Mormons could not" (354). This dilemma made it hard for the Mormons to get sympathy from Missouri leaders, because of their prejudice against Mormons. Mormons were not treated fairly in courts and had few outsiders who would help them. After they left Jackson County, the Mormons hired lawyers, who were non-Mormons, to help them. Bushman cites how John Corrill

claimed the Mormons tried using legal means to get their land back, but the State of Missouri refused to protect their rights and the governor refused to step in (361). Bushman argues that it was the breakdown of justice that brought the war on. The Mormons had to be cautious about what they did, and the Danites' actions, such as destroying Missourians' property, caused more damage to the relationship between the Missourians and the Mormons. Bushman's discussion of these issues help give an understanding of how Missouri vigilantes were able to get away with their actions, but Mormon leaders were the ones arrested at the end of the war.

One of the gaps in Bushman's work concerns the way he leaves out the conversation that took place between Joseph Smith and Jacob Haun about leaving Haun's Mill for Far West. Alexander Baugh, Steven LeSueur and others argued that Smith believed the Mormons at Haun's Mill would have survived if they had listened to Smith and gone to Far West. Bushman does not mention there being any conversation between Haun and Smith before the massacre. The accounts differ about what Smith told Haun, but it still would have been good to mention Smith told Haun to leave Haun's Mill. Historians have claimed that Joseph Smith said no one was ever killed who followed Smith's counsel. By omitting this conversation, Bushman is leaving out the point that Smith saw the attack as having been preventable, which is an important part of the narrative.

Spencer, Thomas M., ed. *The Missouri Mormon Experience*. Columbia, Mo.: U of Missouri, 2010. Print.

## SUMMARY

*The Missouri Mormon Experience* is a collection of ten essays written by Mormon historians and Missouri historians. These essays explore various critical aspects of the Mormon Missouri Experience mostly from 1831-1839. The idea for this book came about as a result of a conference held in the Missouri capital building in Jefferson City, Missouri on September 8 and 9, 2006 called “The Mormon Missouri Experience: From Conflict to Understanding.” The conference was put on by the Missouri State Archives, the University of Missouri, and the Columbia, Missouri, Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. According to Thomas M. Spencer, the point of the conference was to help historians understand the troubles of the 1830s and “to promote understanding between Mormons and non-Mormons in the state (Missouri) today” (14).

This book contains nine different essays from eleven different historians. They each examine important topics dealing with this Mormon Missouri experience and can be divided into four main categories: the relationship between the Mormons and the Missourians from the time the Mormons started to settle in Missouri in 1831 to 1838 when the Mormon War took place; the belief that Zion or New Jerusalem would be established in Missouri; the difference between the Nauvoo Legion and Zion’s Camp and the Danites; and how the Mormons were treated by Missourians after the war from 1838 to 1868. The first category consists of two essays: “The Missouri Context of Antebellum Mormonism and Its Legacy of Violence” by Kenneth H. Winn, and “Was This Really Missouri Civilization?: The Haun’s Mill Massacre in Missouri and Mormon History” by Thomas M. Spencer. These articles discuss the problems between the Mormons and the

Missourians and how both Mormons and Missourians have treated the Haun's Mill Massacre over time. The second category consists of four essays: "Reassessing Joseph Smith's "Appointed Time for the Redemption of Zion," by Ronald E. Romig and Michael S. Riggs; "Mormonism, Millenarianism, and Missouri," by Grant Underwood; "The Great Temple of the New Jerusalem," by Richard O. Cowan; and "The Mormon Temple Site at Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri" by Alexander L. Baugh. These four essays focus on the Mormons' belief in Zion and they will be discussed in more detail later in the summary. The third category consists of two essays: "But for the Kindness of "Strangers: the Columbia, Missouri, Response to the Mormon Prisoners and the Jailbreak of July 4, 1839," by Jean A. Pry and Dale A. Whitman and "Between the Borders: Mormon Transmigration through Missouri, 1838-1868," by Fred E. Woods. These essays discuss how Missourians who were not involved in the war treated Mormons differently than the Missourians who were involved in the war. They also show how Mormon migrants were treated more harshly by those in Missouri who had left the Mormon Church as opposed to the Missourians. The fourth category consists of only one essay: "Lessons Learned: the Nauvoo Legion and What the Mormons Learned Militarily in Missouri" by Richard E. Bennett. This essay explores military type of groups established by the Mormons and examines how the Nauvoo Legion was different from Zion's Camp and the Danites.

The essays focused on the Mormons' beliefs about Zion examines how this issue of Zion was the reason why the Mormons migrated to Missouri. The Mormons' belief in Missouri being the location where Zion was to be established is important to understanding the Mormon War because this belief became the main cause of the

conflicts between the Mormons and the Missourians. The first of these essays is “Reassessing Joseph Smith’s “Appointed Time for the Redemption of Zion,” which argues that Joseph Smith changed the timeline of when Zion would be established and redefined the boundaries of Zion, so the efforts of the Mormons to establish Zion would not seem like a failure. Ronald E. Romig and Michael S. Riggs argue that, after the Mormons were driven out of Jackson County, Joseph Smith became preoccupied with trying to “restore his Missouri followers to their temporal properties and spiritual inheritance” (27). For this essay, Romig and Riggs focus on a second attempt made to reestablish Zion and how the view of Zion changed over time. They write, “By 1840, Joseph Smith widened the geographic sphere of Zion even further to include their new domain in Illinois, and he eschewed firm end-time dating” (41). Zion is still seen by Mormons today as the future site of New Jerusalem and the site of a great temple, but there no timeline about when that will be completed. In his essay “Mormonism, Millenarianism, and Missouri,” Grant Underwood goes into how the Mormons believed Jackson County was where they were supposed to gather to establish Zion. Underwood discusses how the Mormons had an apocalyptic view of the Christian millennium. The Mormons believed that Christ would come to earth and, to escape the wrath of God upon the wicked, they needed to gather in Zion. Underwood argues that the Mormons believed they would be put through a refiner's fire to purify themselves before Christ's Second Coming. Many Mormons believed that the persecutions they faced were part of this refiner's fire. Underwood goes on to argue that as more Mormons settled in Missouri there began to be “economic rivalry, political competition, even cultural differences [that] helped produce a “them-us” mentality on both sides,” which increased the tension

between both sides and turned Missourians against the Mormons (52). In his essay "The Great Temple of the New Jerusalem," Richard O. Cowan explores the importance of Zion to the Mormons. Cowan claims that Mormons have been interested in establishing Zion from the time the church was organized. In June 1833, Joseph Smith revealed the plan for Zion, which included plans for a great temple to be built. The plans also detailed where the temple would be built. The Mormons viewed Zion the same way the Israelites viewed the promised land. They believed God would deliver up the land to them, which Missourians took to mean that the Mormons would drive them out. The belief that God would give the land to the Mormons caused conflict to erupt between the two groups and the Mormons were driven out of Jackson County. Anti-Mormon feelings spread and caused the Mormons to be driven out of Missouri. Cowan discusses how the Mormons were interested in returning to Jackson County from the time they were driven out of Jackson County. In 1867, a group, later known as the Community of Christ, started to buy land in Independence, Missouri where Joseph Smith had prophesied the temple would be built. Later, the former RLDS Church (currently known as the Community of Christ) and then, the Mormon Church also bought land around where the temple was planned to be built (68-69). Cowan argues that even though the Mormon Church is not currently making plans to build a temple in Independence, Missouri, they still plan to build the temple one day. Finally, Alexander Baugh's essay relates to Zion, but it deals more with the Mormons' belief they needed to build more temples than just in Jackson County, Missouri. Far West was the next place the Mormons had planned to build a temple. Taken as a whole, each of these essays in this section show how important Zion was to the Mormons and why they were willing to fight for it.

## ANALYSIS

The essays in *The Missouri Mormon Experience* give new insight into the Mormon War. The book has a loose chronological telling of the Mormon War in Missouri and does not follow a strict timeline like other books about the Mormon War. I like how many of the essays bring up different points of view. For example Pry and Whitman show how there were Missourians that were willing to help the Mormons. The authors of these essays also do not all have the same background which allows for different perspectives. There are authors who have a background in Mormon history, but there are also authors connected to the Community of Christ Church and who have a background in Missouri state history. Having authors who have studied different parts of history make it so this book as a whole is not biased towards one group more than the others. The individual authors might be biased in different ways, but this book is more balanced than some of the other books dealing with the Mormon War.

I focused on the essays about Zion because understanding what Mormons believed about Zion is a key to understanding the causes of the Mormon War. The reason why the Mormons migrated to Missouri was because Joseph Smith claimed he received a revelation that Zion was to be established in Independence, Missouri. The conflicts between the Missourians and the Mormons originated when the Mormons began to settle in Jackson County with the Mormons telling the Missourians, God would give their lands to the Mormons, and the Jackson County Missourians becoming concerned with the amount of influence the Mormons were gaining. The essays about Zion go into more depth about what Zion meant to the Mormons and how the Mormons' belief that



God would give them the land in Independence was a main source of conflict between the Mormons and the Missourians.

These essays bring up some good points, but also leave some gaps. One good point made by Ronald E. Romig and Michael S. Riggs was stating that the Mormons had a “sense of supernatural entitlement” (34). The Mormons did not make themselves likeable to the Missourians by claiming that God would take the land from the Missourians and give it to the Mormons. This sense of supernatural entitlement shows that the Mormons did bring some of the trouble upon themselves. The Mormons also set themselves apart from the Missourians through “economic rivalry, political completion, [and] cultural differences, which sparked conflict (52). Grant Underwood expands this idea by saying these differences produced “a ‘them-us’ mentality on both sides” (52), which is important in showing how from the start the Mormons and Missourians did not get along.

One of the main gaps in the essays about Zion is that none of them expand on the economic side of the Mormon Church. Each of the essays bring up the united order, but none of the authors go into detail about the united order and how the policy affected their relationship with the Missourians. Underwood discusses how the Mormons consecrated their property to the church making them an exclusionary economic force which concern many Missourians. There also is not much mentioned in these essays about the financial troubles the Mormon Church was facing. Some Mormons were not turning their property over to the church, so there was a lack of provisions for others which created conflict between members. The church was struggling to try to provide for those who were coming to Missouri. Some Mormons today see the Mormons’ failure to be able to live

the Law of Consecration as part of the reason why they were not able to establish Zion. With the role finances played in the Mormon Church, more detail is needed when discussing the Mormon War.

Some of the other essays bring up some good points that are important to analyze involving how the Mormons were treated after the war. “But for the Kindness of “Strangers: the Columbia, Missouri, Response to the Mormon Prisoners and the Jailbreak of July 4, 1839” and “Between the Borders: Mormon Transmigration through Missouri, 1838-1868” both show how not all Missourians hated the Mormons and how the tension between the Missourians and the Mormons did go down after the Mormons left Missouri. Too often all the Missourians are discussed as a single group, but it is important to remember that not all of the Missourians were against the Mormons.

Another important essay is "Lessons Learned: The Nauvoo Legion and What the Mormons Learned Militarily in Missouri." This essay does an excellent job of bringing up a different point of view about the military arm of the Mormon Church. Bennett examines the differences between the Nauvoo Legion and early military attempts with Zion's Camp and the Nauvoo Legion. He claims that the Zion's Camp and the Danites “were models for how not to run a militia” (139). The Nauvoo Legion was not a continuation of their military expressions in Missouri. Bennett brings up important information about how the Mormons recognized they needed to make sure they followed the laws of Illinois. They made sure to get an official city charter and permission to set up a militia, which meant it would be part of the state militia. The differences between the Nauvoo Legion and the military actions of the Mormons in Missouri it important to recognize because it shows how they learned and grew from their experience in Missouri.

“Was This Really Missouri Civilization?: The Haun’s Mill Massacre in Missouri and Mormon History” by Thomas M. Spencer is an essay where I would have liked to have seen some points expanded on. Spencer accuses Missouri historians of trying “their best to forget the Haun’s Mill Massacre” (100-101), but he does not discuss why it would be important for Missourians to be taught about the massacre and not let it be forgotten. It would add to the scholarship to include more about how the massacre is important to Missouri history and not just the effect on Mormon history. The Haun’s Mill Massacre played a major part in the Mormons surrendering and ending the Mormon War. Since the Mormons such a significant effect on politics and the economy during the 1830s, it is important also to look at the effect their leaving had in Missouri, which this essay does not examine.

There could be more essays added to this book to cover some of the parts of the Mormon War this book does not discuss, such as the other conflicts of the war besides the Haun’s Mill Massacre. For example, it would be interesting to have an essay that examined those who left the Mormon Church and how their attitudes towards the church changed after they left. I think that looking into the other conflicts would show more about the role each side played in the Mormon War. The essay “Between the Borders: Mormon Transmigration through Missouri, 1838-1868” discusses how some dissenters treated Mormons, traveling through Missouri on their way west, worse than the Missourians. Looking into the role dissenters played in the Mormon War and their attitude towards the Mormon Church would give a better understanding of why some dissenters treated active Mormons badly. These are important topics to explore because they played a major part in the Mormon War, but this book does not discuss these topics.

Overall this book adds some new points of views with the different essays, which were needed in studying the Mormon War. Adding more essays to cover gaps left in this book would contribute to the scholarship of the book.

## CHANGES IN INTERPRETATION

As shown in the previous summaries, the Mormon War of 1838 is a complicated subject where people on both sides are to blame for the conflict. Historians have different ways of interpreting the war and its causes, such as cultural difference between the Mormons and the Missourians and the tradition of extralegal violence in America. The Mormons started settling in Missouri in 1831 because Joseph Smith told his followers that Jackson County was set aside as the place where they would establish Zion. Almost right away there were conflicts between the Missourians and the Mormons. The Missourians were suspicious of the Mormons and their beliefs. The Mormons had told Missourians that God was going to take the land away from the Missourians and give the land to the Mormons. Tensions grew between these groups from 1831-1833. The Mormons were eventually driven out of Jackson County in 1833 by Missouri residents and they were later driven out from other counties in Missouri as well. The Mormons petitioned the Missouri government to get back their property, but received very little help. In 1836, the Missouri legislature set up Caldwell County for the Mormons to settle. In the early part of 1838, however, Mormons started to settle outside of Caldwell County, which once again upset some Missourians so conflict broke out. As the year went on, there were a number of armed conflicts between Mormons and Missourians. Both sides had vigilante groups who plundered, robbed, and destroyed property. At times, the state militia was involved as well, but they were not able to do much to end the conflict. In October 1838, Governor Boggs issued an extermination order against the Mormons. In the order Boggs told General John B. Clark, "The Mormons must be

treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary...” (Gentry, 1729). In November 1838, the Mormons surrendered and were forced to leave the state. The Mormons fled to Illinois in 1839.

I am interested in studying the Mormon War because of impact it had on the Mormons and the different ways the events have been interpreted. Towards the end of the time the Mormons were in Kirkland, Ohio and while they were in Missouri, a large number of Mormons left the church. Many of these dissenters caused problems for the Mormons and helped turn Missourians against the Mormons. The books I studied had good insights into how the dissenters helped shape the war by speaking out against the Mormon Church and spreading rumors. I was also interested in the Danites, a Mormon vigilante group, and how historians have different views of who was involved in the Danite organization and how much church leadership knew and approved of the Danites. It was interesting to study the different view scholars had about the Danites and their actions and how those views shaped the scholars’ interpretations of the Mormon War.

Many books have been written about the Mormon War over time. Some are more notable than others. I picked five books to review which include the following: Leland H. Gentry’s *A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839* (1965), Stephen C. LeSueur’s *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (1986), Alexander L. Baugh’s *A Call to Arms: the 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri* (2000), Richard Lyman Bushman’s *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (2005), and *The Missouri Mormon Experience* (2010) edited by Thomas M. Spencer. I picked these books because of the different interpretations they give of the Mormon War. For Gentry, I was interested because many of the scholars viewed this book as the first one to

examine the Danites and how both the Mormons and Missourians were to blame for the war. I picked LeSueur, because he builds upon what Gentry wrote by examining the use of extralegal violence in the war. In addition, I was intrigued by reviews of his work which praised him for pointing out there are two sides to the war. Baugh was chosen because he is a notable historian who tries to fill in the gaps left behind by LeSueur and Gentry regarding the role of militias and the laws governing them. I wanted to learn more about the role Joseph Smith had in the war and how the events shaped him, so I picked Bushman's biography about Smith, because its reviews emphasize how Bushman's biography does justice to Smith and his followers by giving a critical view of Joseph Smith's life. Finally, I choose Spencer's edited collection because this book offered many different views that interested me. Rather than read another book by just one author, this collection of essays allowed me to learn about the different interpretations scholars have about the war by reading articles from several scholars. Each of these books offers important insights that have increased my understanding of the Mormon War.

One of the most important insights that some of these books offer concerns the role of extralegal violence and militias in the Mormon War. Extralegal violence is used when citizens decide to take the law into their own hands by forming vigilante groups or mobs to protect themselves from those they saw as a threat. In *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, LeSueur discusses the tradition of extralegal violence and the important role it played in the Mormon War with his analysis of how both the Mormons and Missourians formed vigilante groups. LeSueur does a good job of pointing out that both the Mormons and the Missourians believed they could take the law into their own hands and use it to

justify their actions, and he links this belief back to American ideals, writing that “The American people, believing they are the ultimate source of civil law and authority, have employed the principles of democracy and majority rule to justify taking the law into their own hands to enforce their will and values” (6). Because of this American tradition of extralegal violence where people saw themselves as the enforcers of civil law, Missourians were able to justify driving the Mormons out of Missouri. Governor Boggs called out the state militia to put a stop to the conflict, however, LeSueur accuses the vigilantes of preventing civil authorities and the state militia from doing their job. LeSueur ultimately argues that extralegal violence was the main driving force behind the Mormon War, and he views the outcome of the war as “a triumph of popular will over rule by law” (6). His emphasis on the tradition of extralegal violence is important because it allows him to focus on how violent the Mormon War was. The use of extralegal violence also draws new attention to the role of the Danites. Since the Mormons were unable to get much help from the Missouri government, the Danites felt justified in using extralegal violence to go after dissenters and defend themselves against Missourian vigilantes. LeSueur is also able to point out similarities between the Mormons and the Missourians in relation to their use of extralegal violence, instead simply of focusing on the differences between these groups. The results of the Mormon War would have been vastly different if law enforcement and the militia were able to do their jobs without interference from these extralegal groups.

Baugh also explores the use of extralegal violence, focusing specifically on militias and how their relationship to extralegal violence led to mob rule in Missouri. He points out how it had become a tradition for states to set up their own militias as “a means



of maintaining regional and local social control” (28). Baugh argues that Missourians were especially interested in militia service. He also examines how counties set up their own militias, which were part of the state militia. Baugh also focuses on how the Mormons had their own militia in Caldwell County in order to defend themselves against those who sought to cause them harm. Baugh’s focus on militias makes it possible to see how there were more organized groups involved in the war than just the vigilante groups. Baugh argues that one factor which separated the Mormon War from other disturbances involving state militias, was that “the Mormons were the only religious organization to have been confronted or opposed by legally sanctioned state militia force” (29). By examining how militias were used to confront and defend religious groups, Baugh is able to give a new way of exploring how the conflicts escalated into a war. Furthermore, Baugh is also able to focus on how the use of militias made the Mormon War different from other religious conflicts, which did not typically involve military engagements.

In his article “Lessons Learned: The Nauvoo Legion and What the Mormons Learned Militarily in Missouri,” Richard E. Bennett provides a unique approach to exploring the role of militias in the Mormon War by studying two Mormon vigilante groups, Zion’s Camp and the Danites. Bennett explains how both groups served as problematic models for militias. Bennett explores how the Nauvoo Legion was organized differently than Zion’s Camp and the Danites. He points out that when the Mormons first went to Jackson County, Missouri, they were not prepared for what they would face politically, socially, or militarily. Later, when Zion’s Camp set out to help the Missouri Mormons reclaim their land, its members were not trained well enough to fight on their own. Bennett’s analysis of Zion’s Camp shows how its failure helped the

Mormons understand some of the changes they would need to make when organizing a militia. Bennett also states that, “the actions of the Danites were violent, secretive, and oftentimes illegal...” (143). One example of illegal actions taken by Mormons was the Battle of Crooked River, when a group of Mormons attacked a regiment of the Missouri Militia. Bennett claims that the attack on Haun’s Mill, the extermination order, and the arrest of Mormon leader at the end of the war were all consequences of illegal actions taken by Mormons during the war. Bennett is able to show how the consequences served as a powerful lesson for the Mormons. As a result, the Mormons made sure the Nauvoo Legion was set up legally and above board. Each of these authors are able to give new insight into the role extralegal violence played in the war and how the Mormons were able to overcome and learn from their experiences.

Aside from the extralegal violence, these works also offer new insights regarding the causes of the Mormon War. Most accounts of the Mormons War focus on the differences between the Mormons and the Missourians as being one of the main causes of the conflict, but in his article “The Missouri Context of Antebellum Mormonism and Its Legacy of Violence,” Kenneth H. Winn offers a new way of looking at the cause of the war by pointing out similarities between the Mormons and the Missourians. Winn explores how both sides had similar negative views of each other. Winn examines how the Mormons viewed the Missourians as uncultivated and inferior, focusing specifically on Joseph Smith’s opinion that “The Mormons ‘coming from a highly cultivated society in the east’ naturally observed ‘the degradations, leanness of intellect, ferocity, and jealousy of a people that were nearly a century behind the times,’ and ‘roamed about without the benefit of civilization, refinement and religion’” (20-21). By focusing on the

Mormons' negative views of the Missourians, Winn is able to show how the Mormons saw themselves as being superior to the Missourians. For example, even though Smith did not have much of an education, he, and possibly other Mormons, still saw themselves as being more civilized than the Missourians. Winn also examines how the Missourians had similar negative views about the Mormons. He cites an anti-Mormon manifesto stating, "...from their appearance, from their manners, and from their conduct since coming among us, we have every reason to fear that with but very few exceptions, they were the very dregs of that society from which they came, lazy, idle, and vicious" (23). These negative views increased tension on both sides. By examining these similar, negative views that each side had of the other, Winn is able to evaluate how both sides were responsible for the conflict

In contrast, other works argue that the Mormons were responsible for the conflict by stating their claims on land in Missouri. Ronald E. Romig and Michael S. Riggs explore these land claims by examining the Mormons' beliefs about Zion and how the Mormons portrayed these beliefs to the Missourians. In "Reassessing Joseph Smith's 'Appointed Time for the Redemption of Zion,'" Romig and Riggs state that the Mormons had a "sense of supernatural entitlement" (34). By using the word "entitlement," these authors place more emphasis on the Mormons' claim to the land in Jackson County and later other parts of Missouri. They also clarify the reasons why the Missourians felt threatened by the Mormons. Other authors address Zion, but Romig and Riggs add something new by focusing on how this idea of entitlement's destructive effects. Furthermore, this idea of entitlement also shows how these critics hold the Mormons responsible for the conflict.

Bushman also explores the causes of the war by examining how the Mormons portrayed the Missourians when discussing their beliefs about Zion. He explores Ezra Booth's interest in the Mormons' claim that "the riches of the Gentiles [were to] be consecrated to the Mormonites; they shall have lands and cattle in abundance and shall possess the gold and silver, and all the treasures of their enemies" (169). Other authors refer to the Mormons calling the Missourians "Gentiles" as well, but Bushman takes things further by citing Booth as calling the Missourians "enemies." By calling the Missourians "enemies," the Mormons gave the Missourians reason to distrust them even more. Bushman is even more direct than Romig and Riggs in holding the Mormons responsible for the war by focusing on the statements made by Mormons that referred to the Missourians as enemies. These authors are able to clearly show how the Mormons' claim on Missouri turned the Missourians against the Mormons. The causes of the war and its escalation are also made clearer by examining the role exaggerated accounts played in the war.

A number of these works also draw important attention to the effects that exaggerated accounts of conflicts had on the Mormon War. Gentry, for example, examines how rumors about the Mormons and the Indians joining forces led Governor Boggs to justify sending out part of the state militia. Many letters were written to the Governor by Missourians, stating that they were afraid the Mormons were "on the move" (417-418). Gentry, however, points out that many of these claims about the Mormons and the Indians were proven false, but not until after the rumors had done their damage. By illustrating the role that rumors played in the in creating more conflict between the

Mormons and the Missourians, Gentry is able to show that rumors were just as much to blame for creating hostility as actual events were.

Gentry also argues that Captain Samuel Bogart's letters to Governor Boggs were part of the reason Boggs issued the extermination order. Gentry is the one author who cites the entire letter to prove that Governor Boggs was receiving exaggerated accounts about the war. He claims that Bogart took it upon himself to write the Governor after he was dismissed from the field by General Doniphan for sympathizing with the mob against the Mormons. Bogart's letters are important because of the influence they had on the Governor's decision to issue the extermination order. Gentry states, "Boggs, unwilling to hear the Saints' side of the story, unwilling to visit the scene of trouble, and continually besieged...with letters (such as Bogart's)...could scarcely be expected to possess the facts essential to making a rational decision" (572). As Gentry points out, if Boggs had not relied on letters and other reports for information about the war, he could have made more rational decisions about how to put a stop to the Mormon War. By providing a deeper understanding of some of the letters sent to Governor Boggs, Gentry gives a firsthand account of how exaggerated reports influenced the outcome of the war, which lends credibility to his arguments. Gentry points out that if Boggs actually went to Northern Missouri and saw what was going on, he might have handled things differently.

Like Gentry, Baugh also explores the effect that exaggerated accounts had on the Mormon War. He focuses specifically on how exaggerated accounts of the election-day battle in Gallatin were part the reason a group of armed men, including several Danites, decided to visit Judge Adam Black. The Mormons had received a report that claimed at least two, possibly three Mormons were dead and two of the bodies were "lying on the

ground and they (the Missourians) would not let their friends have them for burial” (47), so some members of the group went in order to claim the bodies. If it was not for this false report, the Mormons might have reacted differently if they knew no one had been killed. Baugh uses the Mormons’ reaction to the false account of the battle to show how the Mormons felt threatened by the Missourians and wanted a local judge to protect them. More than simply focusing on Mormon reactions to false reports, Baugh also shows how the Missourians reacted to exaggerated reports. He claims that Missourians got most of their information from newspapers, and most of these newspaper reports were negative towards the Mormons (53). The newspaper made it sound like the Mormons were the aggressors, which put the Mormons at a great disadvantage. Baugh cites Littlefield stating that people in northern Missouri “became poisoned in their feelings by these insidious and often repeated exaggerations, and finally the greater portion of the people of upper Missouri were influenced and prejudiced thereby” (53). By referencing these exaggerated accounts, Baugh is able to examine how the Mormons and Missourians felt threatened by each other, which created further tension. The conflicts ended up being driven by negative emotions as opposed to actual facts about what was going on, which is an important factor to consider when studying the causes of the war.

Some of the insights these authors add to the understanding of the Mormon War do not fit into the previous sections but are still important to consider. One insight that Baugh brings up is that the extermination order was not the reason for the attack on Haun’s Mill. Baugh claims that, in the past, historians have connected the massacre with the extermination order because the massacre happened after the order was issued, but he argues that the vigilantes could not have seen the order until after the attack. Baugh

draws up a timeline showing how the vigilante groups could not have heard about the order until after they had made plans to attack Haun's Mill. The timeline is important because Baugh points out that the plans for the attack were finalized on October 29, 1838, and even though the order was sent out on October 27<sup>th</sup>, it would have been impossible for the commanding generals to receive the order and send copies of it to sub-commanders within 2 days (127). Baugh argues that other authors do not pay attention to how long it would have taken copies of the extermination order to be given to all the regiments. By setting up a timeline to show how the vigilante groups acted on their own, Baugh is able to point out how violent the vigilante groups could be and how the vigilantes operated separately from the militia. Baugh's revision of the timeline downplays the role of the extermination order, which shows how the order was not a central cause of the war. Instead, Baugh emphasizes how the causes of the war were all in place before Boggs issued the extermination order.

Another important insight concerns the fact that not all the Missourians were against the Mormons. The articles "But for the Kindness of "Strangers: the Columbia, Missouri, Response to the Mormon Prisoners and the Jailbreak of July 4, 1839" and "Between the Borders: Mormon Transmigration through Missouri, 1838-1868" both show how not all Missourians hated the Mormons and how the tension between the Missourians and the Mormons diminished after the Mormons left Missouri. In "But for the Kindness of "Strangers", Jean A. Pry and Dale A. Whitman discuss how the Mormon prisoners were treated better in Columbia, Missouri than they were in Richmond, Missouri and they argue that the kindness of people in Columbia allowed the Mormon prisoners to escape. Pry and Whitman argue that "a number of Columbians felt that the

treatment of the Mormons in the western counties and by the governor was unwarranted..." (132). Through their analysis, Pry and Whitman criticize past accounts that tend to place all Missourians into a single group and perpetuate the problematic assumption that all of the Missourians were against the Mormons, which misrepresents the contexts of the conflict.

In his article "Between the Borders: Mormon Transmigration through Missouri, 1838-1868," Fred E. Woods adds to Pry and Whitman's argument by discussing how Mormons passing through Missouri were treated after the war. He explores how the Mormons passing through St. Louis did not face many problems, except from the apostates. Wood argues that there is no evidence of the extermination order being enforced (169). The Missourians whom the Mormons faced while traveling through St. Louis did not turn out to be as threatening as the Mormons had believed the Missourians might be. Many of the Mormons who had to stay in St. Louis while on their way West did not report on problems, except with cholera and apostates trying to stop Mormons from going West. Woods argues that, except for some problems during the Civil War, Missourians were not a threat to Mormons, who had to travel through Missouri on their way West. The other authors do not discuss how things between the Mormons and Missourians changed once the Mormons left, but Woods illustrates how it is important to notice the difference in how the Mormons were treated after the war compared to how they were treated before the war. By revising the way people traditionally view the Missourians as strongly opposed to Mormons, these two articles give a clearer sense of the local dimensions of the conflicts between the Missourians and the Mormons, which varied from place to place. By showing this variety, these works represent the conflict as



one between small specific groups as opposed to an entire state versus an entire religion, which is a more productive view of the conflict since it shows who was really involved rather than generalizing about the participants.

Even though the authors try to be objective, there are times when some of them show bias towards one group as opposed to the other. Baugh is particularly biased to show favor for the Mormons, which is evident in his strong focus on portraying the Missourians in negative terms and the Mormons in more sympathetic terms. For example, Baugh shows favor towards the Mormons when he discusses a statement made by a Missourian representative about how the Mormons in De Witt begged for peace and wanted the civil authorities to resolve the conflict, which allows Baugh to illustrate that the Mormons were only acting out of defense (74). He also places more emphasis on the destructive actions taken by Missourians than he does the Mormons. For example, Baugh argues that, when the Mormons were conducting raids against the Missourians, they would confine their plundering to Missourians they knew were associated with the mob, but Missourians are shown as willing to attack any Mormons. He also argues that attempts to drive the Mormons out were unwarranted and illegal, and the Mormons had every right to defend themselves (171). While it is true that many of the actions taken to drive the Mormons out were illegal, it is clear that Baugh is more sympathetic to the Mormons than to Missourians who suffered due to the destruction caused by the Mormons.

Bushman and Gentry also show bias towards the Mormons as well, but they are more subtle about it than Baugh. For example, Gentry explores destructive actions taken by the Missourians, but he also examines destructive actions of the Danites. He discusses

how the Danites stole from Missourians and gave the goods to the church. By looking into these types of actions taken by both groups, Gentry is able to take a more neutral approach. Bushman also is not as biased as Baugh. Bushman goes through the problems Joseph Smith faced with dissenters causing problems, but he also does not portray Smith as being completely innocent of actions the Mormons took during the war. Smith believed in avenging insults and believed the Mormons had the right to protect themselves. Bushman identifies himself as a Mormon, but he does not let that stop him from trying to take a more critical approach, which helps his work to be taken more seriously by other scholars.

In contrast to Baugh, Gentry, and Bushman, LeSueur's account shows bias against the Mormons. At one point, while discussing an attack from Captain Bogart and his men against Mormons, he cites affidavits from Sydney Rigdon and Hyrum Smith as being exaggerated. The affidavits tell about several homes being destroyed by Bogart and his men, but LeSueur writes, "No substantial evidence supports these claims. All eyewitness accounts by Mormon settlers state that they [the Mormons] were either disarmed or ordered to leave their homes, but they do not report any burning or plundering by the Ray County troops" (133). LeSueur does not reference any of these eyewitness accounts that would prove Sydney Rigdon and Hyrum Smith's affidavits to be overly exaggerated. In, LeSueur cites affidavits signed by Orson Hyde and Thomas B. Marsh, who both left the Mormon Church in October of 1838, about militant activities of the Mormons and Joseph Smith's claims that his people would overtake the country and eventually the entire world. He uses these affidavits to argue that Mormons planned to use military action to take over land in Missouri and does not mention the possibility

these accounts were exaggerated. The use of these affidavits suggests that LeSueur was biased against the Mormons.

The Mormon War is a topic that can be difficult to discuss without being biased, but it is also a subject that needs to be examined from a more neutral position. With Baugh and LeSueur, even though their accounts add to the scholarship about the war, their bias takes away from the importance of their work. They interpret some of the firsthand accounts differently, which allows for some of these accounts to be overlooked or viewed as being exaggerated. It also allows their bias to shape their account of the war. Bias also plays an important role in shaping scholarship about the Mormon War because of how it can change the way events are interpreted. Baugh's bias towards the Mormons keeps him from fully examining the part the Mormons played in causing the war. Baugh does bring up some good points such as the role of the Danites, but he also downplays some important points by portraying some destructive actions of the Mormons as being purely defensive. LeSueur has similar problems as Baugh with being biased against the Mormons concerning the way he interpreted the different affidavits. The one book I read that had the most neutral approach was *The Missouri Mormon Experience*. By having articles from multiple authors, Thomas M. Spencer was able to put together a book that looked at the events of the war from multiple sides, which is important when studying a contentious topic such as the Mormon War. Even though it can be hard to discuss the Mormon War from an unbiased point of view, the best scholarship about this subject comes from others who try hard to not let bias stop them from examining the war from all sides.

Studying the Mormon War has widened my understanding of who was involved and the roles of everyone involved. I was able to see how the scholarship about the Mormon War has changed over time by studying accounts from Gentry, Baugh, and LeSueur. Baugh and LeSueur were able to build upon what Gentry discussed and add new insights, particularly regarding the role of extralegal violence and militias. Reading about the role of extralegal violence and the militias has expanded my knowledge about what caused the Mormon War and how it lasted so long. I also gained a greater understanding of who was involved with the Danites and how much Mormon leaders knew about the group. These different accounts gave me a better grasp of how both the Mormons and Missourians were responsible for the war and how their cultural differences shaped the war.

## Bibliography

- Baugh, Alexander L. *A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri*. Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, 2000. Print.
- Bennett, Richard E. "Lessons Learned: The Nauvoo Legion and What the Mormons Learned Militarily in Missouri." *The Mormon Missouri Experience*. Ed. Thomas M. Spencer. Columbia: U of Missouri, 2010. 139-50. Print.
- Bushman, Richard L. and Jed Woodworth. *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. New York: Vintage, 2005. Print.
- Gentry, Leland Homer. *A History of the Latter-Day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839*. Diss. Brigham Young University. 1965. Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History and BYU Studies, 2000. Deseret Bookshelf. Web. 1 Mar 2016.
- LeSueur, Stephen C. *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*. Columbia: U of Missouri, 1987. Print.
- Pry, Jean A., and Dale A. Whitman. "But for the Kindness of Strangers: The Columbia, Missouri, Response to the Mormon Prisoners and the Jailbreak of July 4, 1839." *The Mormon Missouri Experience*. Ed. Thomas M. Spencer. Columbia: U of Missouri, 2010. 119-38. Print.
- Romig, Ronald E., and Michael S. Riggs. "Reassessing Joseph Smith's 'Appointed Time for the Redemption of Zion'" *The Missouri Mormon Experience*. Ed. Thomas M. Spencer. Columbia: U of Missouri, 2010. 27-49. Print.
- Spencer, Thomas M., ed. *The Missouri Mormon Experience*. Columbia, Mo.: U of Missouri, 2010. Print.
- Winn, Kenneth H. "The Missouri Context of Antebellum Mormonism and Its Legacy of Violence." *The Missouri Mormon Experience*. Ed. Thomas M. Spencer. Columbia: U of Missouri, 2010. 19-26. Print.
- Woods, Fred E. "Between the Borders: Mormon Transmigration through Missouri, 1838-1868." *The Mormon Missouri Experience*. Ed. Thomas M. Spencer. Columbia: U of Missouri, 2010. 151-77. Print.